DISTRIBUTING REEF MAPS TO RESOURCE MANAGERS: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN DETAILED REMOTE SENSING MAPPING AND GLOBAL APPLICATIONS*

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ABSTRACT

Natural resource managers around the world desperately need maps of coral reefs and adjacent land areas. These managers are making daily decisions that impact the health of coral reefs and the economies of the communities that depend on them. In a new NASA-funded project, remote sensing scientists have teamed together with the international organizations responsible for providing maps of tropical coastal regions to managers. Methods currently being used in "research-mode" for mapping for shallow reefs and adjacent coasts will be generalized to protocols that can be applied regionally for producing basic maps. Classes for reef areas will include major geomorphologic features and bottom types. Mapped areas on adjacent land will focus on features of the land environment that may be potentially threatening for reef systems including rivers, wetlands, agriculture and urban areas. Collaboration with the International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management, ICLARM, and the United Nations Environmental Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre, UNEP-WCMC insures that the data products developed meet the needs of existing international programs including the International Coral Reef Action Network and *ReefBase*. This presentation will summarize the project structure and objectives, and present preliminary results from the first 4 months. We will describe the transition from research to operational methods using Landsat 7 data for operational production of land cover / shallow reef maps. We will also demonstrate how UNEP-WCMC and ReefBase will distribute such maps in support of the activities of international development agencies and local resource managers.

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